DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 106 856 CS 202 063

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TITLE Bias Against Women in American Educational History--A Propaganda Analysis.
PUB DATE Mar 75
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Conference on College Composition and Communication (26th, St. Louis, March 13-15, 1975)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS Bias; Doctoral Theses; *Educational History; Educational Research; *Females; Literature Reviews; *Propaganda; *Sex Discrimination; *Textbook Bias; Womens Studies

ABSTRACT

A dissertation study done by the author examining the bias against women in American histories of education is discussed in this paper. The educational histories selected for the study were categorized by recognized high professional quality and high academic status. Each book analyzed concentrated on different subject areas of educational history, and all were current except one. The first hypothesis of the study was that both pre-World War II and modern American histories of education, under bias and propanganda analysis, reveal bias against women. The second hypothesis was that this bias propaganda in modern American histories of education used, both quantitatively and qualitatively, a significant slanted historical approach that lacked professional objectivity. The third hypothesis was that modern American histories of education showed at least as much bias against women as that found in the pre-World War II American education histories, despite social, economic, political, and educational changes in the roles and status of women. All of these hypotheses were supported by the findings. (TS)

ED106856

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Talk as Member of
Panel "Propaganda and the Images of Women"
Friday, 8:30 a.m., March 14, C.C.C.C.
St. Louis, 1975

I spent a number of years working for the United States government in Asia, with a specialty in media and propaganda analysis, and have published a book on propaganda, The Persuaders (Atheneum)(1972). But this talk is about a lengthy (dissertation) study which I recently completed: a propaganda analysis of bias against women in American histories of education. The study was lengthy--well over 500 pages--not because I was seeking to find and "prove" education propaganda material that was difficult to discover and formerly unrealized, but because I was seeking to offer support for the unsupportable--the unacceptable. Overkill, with overwhelmingly piled evidence, was necessary, or seemed so.

The educational histories selected for this study were characterized by recognized high professional quality and high academic status. As part of the selection also, each book analyzed concentrated on different subject areas of educational history approach. All were current works except one. This earlier educational history was published prior to United States' entry into World War II, and was by a historian regarded as most eminent

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in the field. The other educational histories were current, modern works, published within the past decade.

The first hypothesis of the study was that both pre-World War II and modern American histories of education, under bias and propaganda analysis, reveal bias against women. The second hypothesis was that the degree of this bias-propaganda, both quantitatively and qualitatively, in the modern American histories of education caused a significantly slanted historical approach that lacked professional objectivity. The third hypothesis was that modern American histories of education showed at least as much bias against women as that found in the pre-World War II American education history despite social, economic, political and educational changes in roles and status of women. All of these hypotheses were supported by the findings.

At this point, it should be noted that these educational histories studied, chosen for their authors' status and their otherwise highly professional materials, in no sense represented works biased against women as contrasted with other such modern educational histories offering different historical treatment of women. In essence, the findings of bias against women in these studied works were regarded as valid for all modern educational histories. Nothing found in wide reading of this field denied the findings of this study. Nor did the findings indicate deliberate or intentional propaganda on the part of the historians. Admittedly, however, in view of the scope of bias implied by this study, the conclusion is inescapable that no professional objectivity was applied to the use of biased communication against women and no objective standards were set up

which would exert influence for even limited re-examination of materials and reassessment of values applied. This conclusion has particular impact in a field of study which stresses objectivity of presentation, and in which women/girls represent a majority of participants. In brief, in the case of women, objectivity, otherwise highly important to professional historians, apparently becomes non-essential and even irrelevant. Once this point is accepted, then the going beyond the first hypothesis to the second, the offering of a significantly--i.e., overwhelmingly--slanted approach, becomes almost inevitable. Without limits, there are no limits.

The third hypothesis, in view of the use of only one earlier work of American educational history, must be limited to qualified comment. The qualities of this one work, by an early historian regarded as eminent in the field, might not be those of other early American educational histories--i.e., other works contemporary with this one might be as biased against women as modern educational histories. No stand was taken in this study to the contrary. Nonetheless, the finding of a regressive attitude in modern educational histories compared with this earlier history was supported by other earlier histories which also offered more coverage on women in education than modern works did.

At this point, it should be noted that material evaluated in this work, except for Selection, was not historical context material but the interpretations, evaluations, and attitudes of the educational historians.

One recommendation, based on the minimal implications of the first hypothesis, was that educational historians should forsake their unspoken credenda against women and seek out criteria of factual significance,

subjecting their work to such criteria. If their stated criteria admits women are to be eliminated from their educational history, then at least the education student is alerted to the omission. But educational historians should not expect to be allowed to speak as Thomas Coryate, the Elizabethan traveler who reported he "found Venetian actresses almost as good as the Elizabethan boy actors" in presenting women.

Another recommendation, out of the first hypothesis that both past and current American educational historians exhibit bias against women, was that students need more knowledge of biased communication approaches in order to evaluate textbooks. Education students at least must be taught to insist on more information on that half of the population left almost unmentioned--and to be aware of the propagandic elements that omit that half. In any case, women who are to become teachers should learn enough to avoid their becoming the instrument of their own oppression.

The second hypothesis, indicating significantly slanted educational history approaches that lacks professional objectivity, presents need for overall revision of modern educational histories. The recommendation is made because the problem is basic. To offer historical analogy, women teachers seeking information on their profession and on their education are in a situation similar to that of the early Christians seeking to acquire education but forced to use Greek and Roman classic materials which were contrary to their Christian beliefs. Expurgated material is never entirely satisfactory. A new beginning must be made.

The third hypothesis, that modern American histories of education show at least as much bias against women as that found in a pre-World War II American educational history, despite changes in roles and status of women, has implications in terms of lack of historical awareness of realities and lack of relevance for students. For a woman, educational history is not education if it teaches to despise oneself. It is thus recommended that modern educational historians seek out the past and present day realities of women in American education and society in order that women and men students may be able to relate their work in education to educational history.

The situation of women students in American educational history--a Foundations course in Education--is similar to the situation of Alice in Wonderland, told politely to have some wine but on looking for it, is told politely there isn't any.

All of the foregoing information was necessary in order to indicate direction. What has been left out of course is the bias propaganda map which offered these results and incited these recommendations.

The propaganda analysis consisted of five biases: Bias of Language, Bias of Omission, Bias of Inertia, Bias of Unconscious Falsification, and Bias of Cumulative Implication. These five biases were chosen because these were the five biases used by the national associations of historians of the United States and Great Britain in a 1966 study of nationalistic bias in historical textbooks. All that was needed then was to find the propaganda devices which exhibited these biases.

The Word Devices applicable as exhibition of Bias of Language were primarily Name Calling, Loaded Words, Glittering Words, Ambiguity (Masculine Form, Ambiguity-Tent Words, and Symbolic). The Bias of Omission was exhibited by Selection Devices--False Emphasis (Quantitative), Card Stacking and Out of Context (Qualitative). Bias of Inertia appeared in Over-Simplification, Stereotypes-Myths and in Appeals (Authority) Device. Bias of Unconscious Falsification was exhibited in Misleading Association and Logical Fallacies-Masculine Premise and 100 Percent Great Man Premise. Bias of Cumulative Implication appeared in use of propaganda techniques of Repetition and Distraction--Tokenism, Token Gesture, and Segregation. All of these exhibitions of bias against women were found--and found significantly, i.e. overwhelmingly--in all of the current textbooks. In the older textbook published prior to World War II, these exhibitions of bias were found but not significantly--i.e., there was some balance on the women's "side," and not all devices were present.

It is manifestly impossible to go into detail on the biased communication found under the various biases in these educational histories but some of the material found can be given. Insofar as Language Bias is concerned, the use of the words "woman" and "women" and "people" was extremely rare. "Man," "Men," and "mankind" appeared on most of the pages of these texts. When the word "people" was used, it was almost always, interestingly enough, misused, as it indicated a condition or viewpoint that applied to men perhaps but not to women. One text used "fair sex," or equivalent, and "thinking men," or equivalent, throughout--a combining of language bias and stereotype. Glittering Words, such as "talent,"

"democracy," "freedom" were used--but without recognition that their application, however true otherwise, did not reach women. Ambiguity-Tent Words as "public," were used without apparent awareness that the "public" referred to did not include women.

Bias of Omission exhibitions, such as Selection-False Emphasis, were almost humorously overwhelming, with, for example, a 600 page work offering less than 200 words on women as people in their own right in education. Selection-Card Stacking, which appears in the forms of case-making, images and half truths was equally overwhelming. For example, no images or models of women whatever were given in any of the texts; all of the modern texts offered several historical images or models of men.

But the most striking exhibition of Bias of Omission appeared in the form of Selection--Out of Context. Women--their presence, actions, and, above all, their values are totally left out of context. For just a few examples: coverage is given to men's history of pressing for liberty, equality, democracy, education; women's history is ignored or distorted. Discrimination against women in education during the past century or more is completely passed over. Even in the field of higher education--where the educational historian is--no mention is made of discrimination against women in test scores, professional school enrollments, athleticism, scholarships, jobs, faculty positions, attitudes. Contributions of women to education, to the society, to the economy are omitted. Women teachers, as such, are not pictured; men teachers are. Difficulties of girl students, past and present, are omitted in the modern histories; difficulties of boy

students are not omitted. Struggles of women, white and black, in abolition, prohibition and rights movements are omitted or derogated.

Bias of Inertia, exhibited in stereotypes-myths, results in no recognition of stereotyping of women in textbooks, although recognition is given of religiosity, nationalistic and other biases found in these textbooks. Women are found in stereotypes, if found at all, in the educational histories. Women are by implication utterly passive to and in education, even during periods when women formed the majority in teaching profession. As stereotypes, with a characteristic of passivity, women and what they do or learn remains unchanged, even, in certain histories, over many centuries. Only men and what they learn changes. Bias of Inertia exhibited by Authority Appeal does not permit offering women as authorities on general education, and, interestingly enough, not on women's education either, except in the pre-World War II educational history. Moreover, male authorities who have expressed bias against women as fully human beings are nonetheless used by the historians as authorities on education desirable for men--and women.

Exhibiting Bias of Unconscious Falsification is the propagandic form of Misleading Association. Because of the few references to women, misleading association is limited, but virtually constant, when references and interpretations are given. If given at all, token women--the same two or three who opened higher education institutions are invariably chosen--are offered mistaken interpretation or suggested as having even ludicrous ideas in education. Men educators, with ideas far more outdated and

"ludicrous," are never so designated. Logical Fallacies--Masculine Major Premise and 100 Percent Great Man Premise are other forms of such Bias of Unconscious Falsification. These overlap into questions of values and are often interesting. Thus, "great men" are credited with the offering of common schools in the United States; no reference is made to point that these schools would never have existed except for sacrifice, however involuntary, of extremely low-salaried women teachers. Equally pertinent questions can be raised about interpretation of opening of high education to women as a sudden generous change of heart--instead of, again, need for low salaried women teachers. "Patriotic" interpretation is, in these textbooks, "military" in whatever age. But to take it into the modern age and modern context, references to the G.I. Bill indicate it as a benefit to all. No assessment of values related to women is made.

Thus, for bearing arms, with risk and loss of life, risk of wounding of body, and "loss" of time, the G.I. Bill rewards overwhelmingly men. Yet, if one reassessed such values, women, in giving birth and care to children, risk and lose lives (historically in equal numbers), are wounded in bodies, and "lose" far more time from their own individual lives. The historian's values are clear: bearing arms is important and deserves educational reward; bearing children is unimportant and deserves no reward. In fact, of course, our society penalizes women--in social security, retirement, job benefits, and of course, less education and less educational opportunity. Universities that spend millions on athletics, for men, have in the past demonstrated and still in the

present demonstrate less willingness to expend any money on day care centers for mothers seeking to be students. This Masculine Major Premise historical Logical Fallacy approach extends into many other areas of equal/importance but this talk has gone on too long already.

The Bias of Cumulative Implication, appearing in Repetition, is obvious enough. Distraction in the forms of tokenism and token gestures has been already implied in this talk. Segregation--the taking of women in these textbooks out of the educational mainstream and giving them one to four pages, usually in a strangely unreal "sudden" appearance of wanting higher education and represented by two or three equally unrealistically presented women educators--is just as much a disservice as segregation always is to representation and equality.

At the outset, some three years ago when beginning this study, it was indicated that insofar as women in educational history were concerned, the absence of evidence was not evidence of absence, and the study therefore should incite educational historians to seek out women's work in education. As it turned out, however, materials on women in education were readily available for this study and very much on records, despite their disuse by historians. Women educators, black and white, have for more than a century formed the majority of instructors. Women teachers, black and white, risked and sometimes gave their lives in leadership and presence in American education. Many of the women known as abolitionists and suffragists were or had been classroom teachers. Graduates of the early normal schools and the first higher educational institutions for women were indeed the nucleus for staffing American public education. They

changed classroom procedures and disciplines. Material on women in American education is available, with a little effort. It is effort, however, which has not been forthcoming from American educational historians--faculty members of prestige institutions afforded opportunity and foundation support to publish and to teach in this field. Women are rare species indeed in such privileged groups, even in being allowed to teach, much less to receive foundation support to publish more balanced histories.

It is time to correct the distortion found in word use and in other propagandic forms in educational histories--as well as in other "educational" textbooks. For women and men concerned about fellow humans, what is offered students is not educational history, offered with a modicum of objectivity. What is offered on women in American educational history is blatant propaganda, however much unintended, based on "acceptable" professional and social bias.